

September 22, 2011

Mr. Mark Vaniman

Seney National Wildlife Refuge Manager
1674 Refuge Entrance Rd.
Seney, MI. 49883



Dear Mark,

We are writing this letter to request further help to improve the sport fishing within the Beaver Island Archipelago. We have two goals, one is for the enjoyment that sport fishing brings, and the other is improvement of the economic base for Beaver Island and the surrounding communities.

In the past, the Beaver Island Archipelago was a world renowned fishing area for perch and small mouth bass. Over the past **three decades** these fisheries have been severely depleted in large part due to the increased number of Double-Crested Cormorants (DCCO) in the area; an impact that has been well documented. There are indications the small mouth bass have started to return here, but it has been a slow recovery as the DCCO's are still plentiful in the area.

In reviewing the Seney National Wildlife Refuge website, we found references indicating that management of fish and sport fishing is one of your objectives.

In the 2009 Seney National Wildlife Comprehensive Conservation Plan
under Refuse Purposes we found:

"... conservation, management, and restoration
of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and
their habitats for the benefit of present and
future generations of Americans..." 16 U.S.C. §
668dd(a)(2) (National Wildlife Refuge System
Administration Act)

We also see game fish management as a Unit 1 conservation objective within the Seney Wildlife Refuge itself.

We are asking your help to accelerate recovery of sport fish within the Beaver Island Archipelago. Specifically we are asking you to balance sport fish

management with other wildlife management, and not favor one over the other. We do recognize that you granted the USDA access to the other islands in this area and we appreciate your support in this endeavor. However, access to Hat Island was denied while Hat Island supports the largest colony of DCCO in the Great Lakes area. While the USDA personnel did oil eggs on the other islands this past spring, and take the maximum allowed number of adult birds, the number of chicks hatched from Hat Island most likely exceeded the number of adults taken. Further, the efficiency of reducing the DCCO population is much more economical and less intrusive at the egg stage than taking them as adults. With all budgets facing significant cuts, this must be considered. And having both personally assisted USDA-WS personnel in their Hat Island egg oiling efforts in 2010, this can be accomplished without the disturbance of the large Caspian Tern colony on the island.

It should also be pointed out that based on historical aerial photos Hat island appears to have suffered serious environmental damage from the nesting of the DCCO, an environmental impact that must be impacting the fauna on the island and one would suspect the surrounding waters from the guano runoff.

Thanks in advance for your continued support. If you have any questions about our objectives here, please feel free to contact either of us.

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Beaver Island Wildlife Club
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Email: dtritsch@tds.net

Dr. Jeffery Powers DVM
President
Beaver Island Wildlife Club
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Chamber@BeaverIsland.org
(231) 448-2505

October 5, 2011

Mr. Mark Vaniman
Seney National Wildlife Refuge Manager
1674 Refuge Entrance Rd.
Seney, MI. 49883

Dear Sir,

I'm writing this letter to request your help to improve the sport fishing within the Beaver Island Archipelago for two important reasons. One is for the fun and outdoor enjoyment that sport fishing brings to Beaver Islanders and visitors. The second is for tourism related economic improvement assistance for Beaver Island and northern Michigan.

In the past, the Beaver Island Archipelago was a world class fishing destination for perch and small mouth bass. Over the past three decades these fisheries have been severely depleted in large part due to the increased number of Double-Crested Cormorants (DCCO) in northern Lake Michigan; an impact that has been well documented. Bass fishing is beginning to improve, but we still have a long way to go.

The Chamber of Commerce is asking for your help to accelerate recovery of sport fish within the Beaver Island Archipelago. Specifically we are asking you to balance sport fish management with other wildlife management.

Our Wildlife Club reports, "... access to Hat Island was denied while Hat Island supports the largest colony of DCCO in the Great Lakes area. While the USDA personnel did oil eggs on the other islands this past spring, and take the

maximum allowed number of adult birds, the number of chicks hatched from Hat Island most likely exceeded the number of adults taken. Further, the efficiency of reducing the DCCO population is much more economical and less intrusive at the egg stage than taking them as adults. With all budgets facing significant cuts, this must be considered. And having both personally assisted USDA-WS personnel in their Hat Island egg oiling efforts in 2010, this can be accomplished without the disturbance of the large Caspian Tern colony on the island."

Historical aerial photos show that Hat Island appears to have suffered serious environmental damage from the nesting of the DCCO. This environmental impact that has resulted in a bomb damaged surface appearance nearly devoid of green plants. Had humans done the same legal action would be well underway. Surly a "normal" number of DCCO's is a few thousand not tens of thousands. Based on their most recent report it appears that USDA-WS would agree.

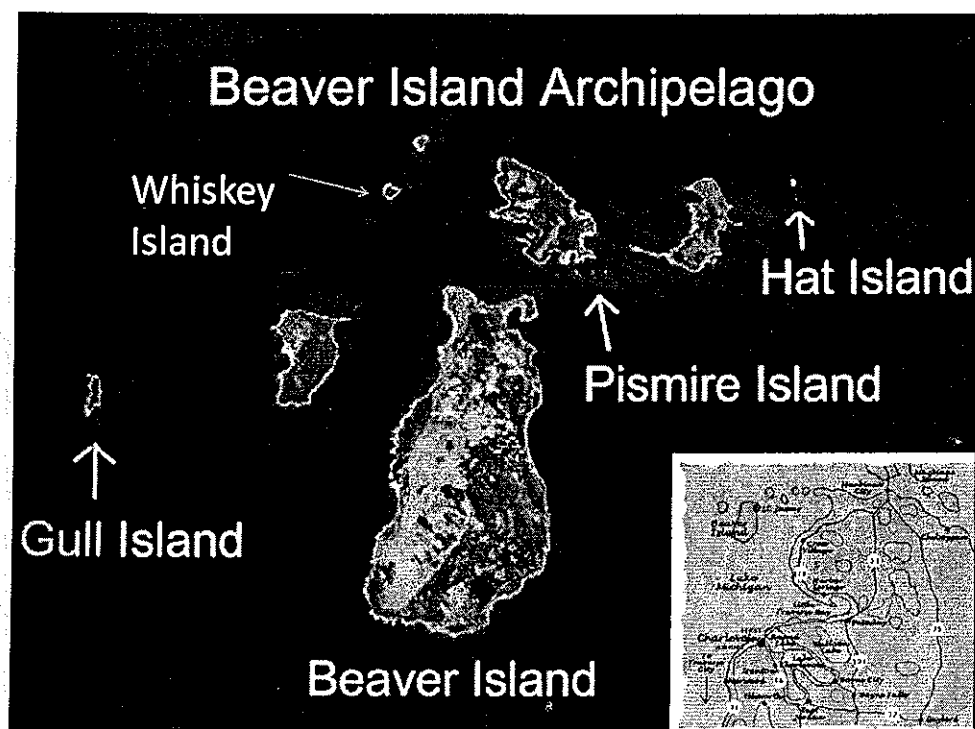
Thanks in advance for your consideration.

Stephen C. West

Executive Director

Cc: Chamber Directors

Cormorants Management in the Beaver Island Archipelago 2011



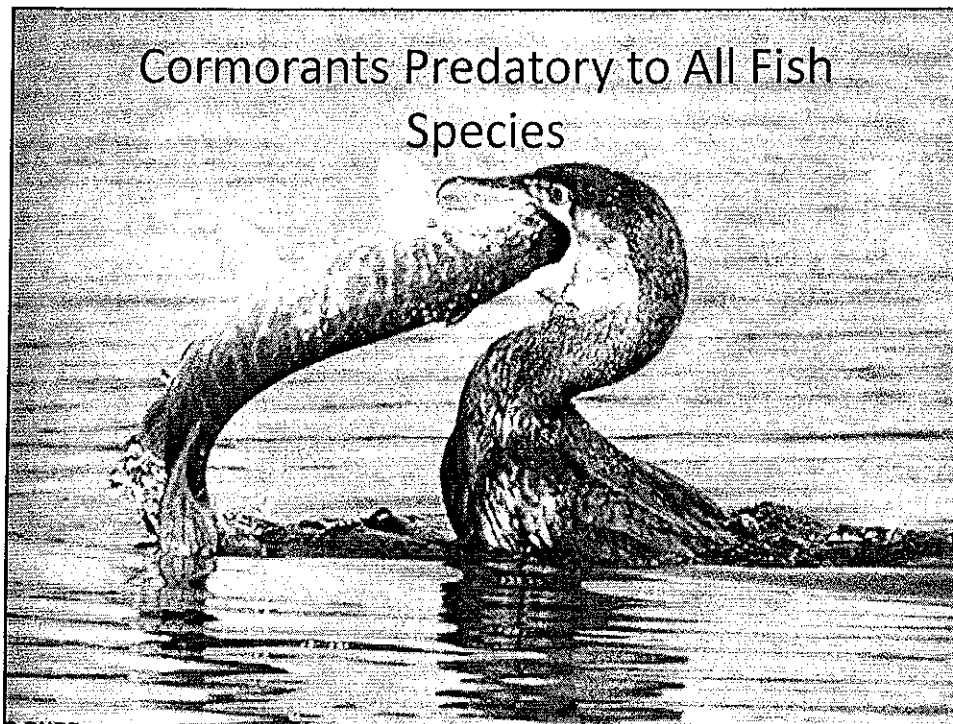
The Beaver Island Archipelago – A Heritage of Fine Sport Fishing



Statewide Cormorant Management Progress

- Overall statewide significant reduction in cormorant numbers
- Excellent rebound in Perch fishery in Les Cheneaux islands proven to be directly related to cormorant predation by MDNR biologist Dave Fielder, Upper Peninsula Sportsmen's Alliance identified cormorant management as a top priority
- Cormorant management is vital to enhancement of Michigan's fisheries a component of our tourism initiative, *Pure Michigan*
- 2009 – Establishment of a Statewide cormorant coordination committee by Michigan DNR, bringing together DNR, USDA-WS, leadership groups statewide, MUCC, tribal and other stakeholders
 - Provides better integration of resources
 - Identified the Beaver Island Archipelago as the number one area to intensify control efforts
 - 2010 This group established a system to protect stocking sites by informing local volunteers of DNR fisheries fish plants to provide protection for the stocked fish at these sites.
 - 2011 Meeting just concluded last week at the RAM Center. Focused on the need to establish funding resources in the future as Federal Sources will likely be removed with the automatic spending cuts in 2013. Assessment of progress in some areas and lack of resources to address problem in southern portion of the state.

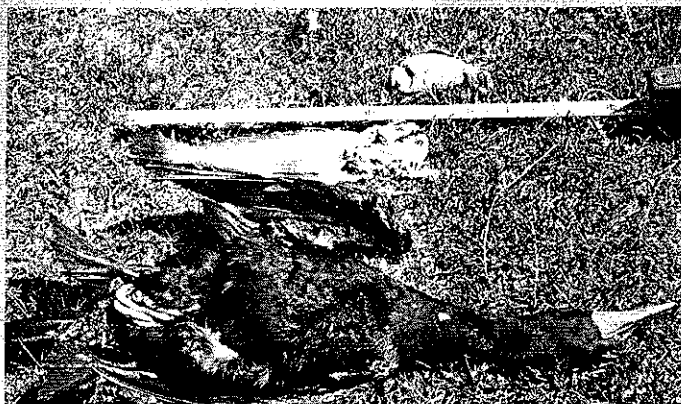
Cormorants Predatory to All Fish Species



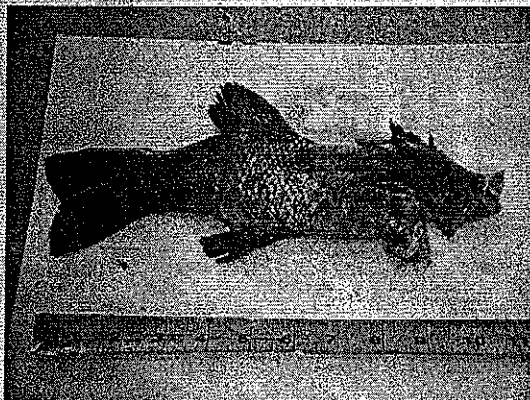
Predation on Stock Lake Trout



Lake Geneserath Walleyes



Predatory on Inland and Great Lakes each bird consumes up to 1.5# fish per day

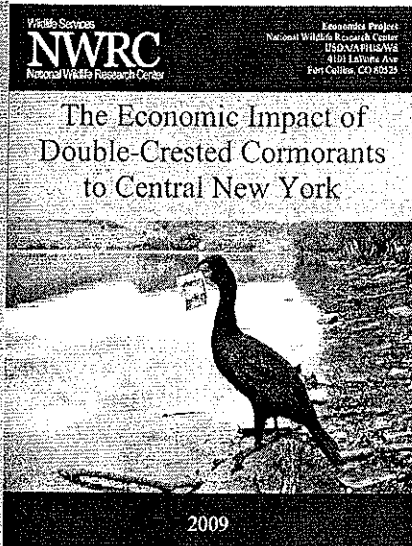


St James Harbor Small mouthed Bass
Regurgitated



Lake Geneserath Bluegills

2009 Economic Impact of Cormorants Quantified



- Cormorant Damage cost the Oneida Lake Region in New York between 6 million and 33 million dollars in damage every year, and between 200 and 800 jobs per year
- Cormorant control efforts brought a return to the local economy of between 15 to 40 dollars for every dollar spent on cormorant control
- These control measures saved between 1500 and 5000 jobs from 1990 to 2005 in this region

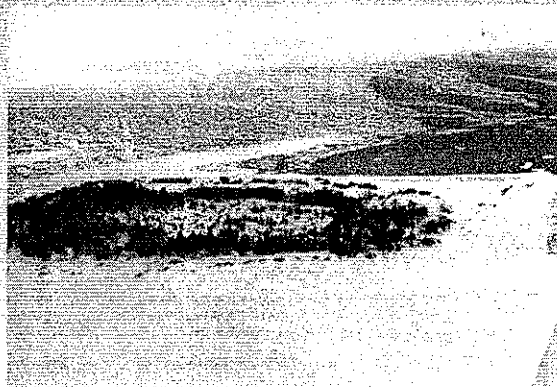
Cormorant Management in 2011

Key Points

- Overall a 63% reduction in cormorant nest counts from 11549 in 2008 to 4300 in 2011
- Loss of ability to egg oil Hat Island which had achieved the largest single cormorant control measure event by oiling over 4500 nests, in total 7616 nests were oiled in the Beaver Island Archipelago in 2011
- Letters from island organizations asking for the reestablishment of BSDA-WS access to Hat Island
- Expanding colony at Whiskey Island, commenced management now under local jurisdiction island is owned by St James Township

Hat Island pre cormorant Invasion

Island (1970's) had a lush exterior and a central less forested area that had been used as a test site during WWII. Home to dozens of species of colonial water birds, including gulls and terns



Hat Island 2010

USDA-WS was given authority to access the island being careful to avoid Caspian Tern colony



Island Vegetation destroyed due to cormorant waste



Cooperative Effort between USDA WS and local deputized volunteers

Hat Island Vegetation Destruction

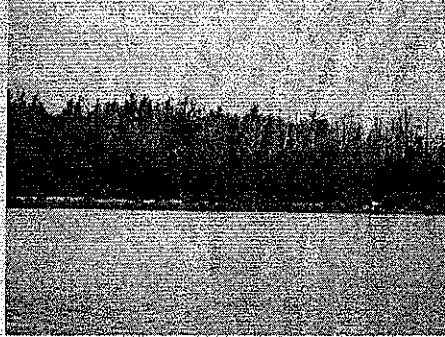


Caspian Tern Colony Hat Island



Other islands in the Archipelago

- Egg oiling and lethal control continued at Gull Island, Pismire Island and a limited amount of control began at Whiskey Island



Whiskey Island tree nests causing deforestation



Gull Island increase in tree nests

Concerns for Cormorant Control in 2012

- Federal funding for cormorant control in serious jeopardy in current budget discussions
- EA for Michigan will allow for a larger cormorant take (from 10,500 to close to 20,000 birds) however the resources to carry this out have not increased
- Hat Island has been closed out of 2011 cormorant control measures therefore severely limiting the ability to continue the level of control as directed by 2009 MDNR Cormorant coordination committee. **Legislators should contact Mark Vaniman, Seney Wildlife Refuge Manager and ask him for the data to validate this measure.**
- Whiskey Island may be being switched to state control and it will be **imperative to grant permission to USDA-WS to continue control efforts on this island, as the colony is expanding with tree nesting cormorants**
- Imperative that State officials take an active role in overseeing the continued progress in cormorant control measures to ensure that progress to date is not stalled, curtailed or reversed. Damage is being noted around the state, from Lake Erie throughout the Upper Peninsula.

Cormorant Funding

- 2004 = \$125,000 (\$103,000)
- 2005 = \$150,000 (\$117,000)
- 2006 = \$200,000 (\$160,000)
- 2007 = \$200,000 (\$160,000) + \$150,000 State MI
- 2008 = \$160,000 (\$120,000)
- 2009 = \$148,000 (\$111,000)
- 2010 = \$148,000 (\$111,000)
- 2011 = \$148,000 (\$111,000) + \$20,000 State MI
- 2012 = GLRI funds?, USDA funds?, State funds?

Respectfully Submitted

Jeffrey F Powers D.V.M.

President, Beaver Island Wildlife Club

